



## Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment

### Types of Hazardous Chemicals

A chemical emergency happens when a chemical or toxic substance is released and may cause adverse health effects. Chemical releases can be unintentional, as in the case of an industrial accident or spill, or intentional, as in the case of a terrorist attack.

**Categories of Hazardous Chemicals** (as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

Category	Description
Anticoagulants	Poisons that prevent the blood from clotting properly.
Biotoxins	Poisons that come from plants or animals.
Blister agents/ vesicant	Chemicals that severely blister the eyes and skin.
Blood agents	Poisons that affect the body by being absorbed into the blood.
Caustics (acids)	Chemicals that burn on contact or corrode the skin, eyes, and mucus membranes.
Choking agents	Chemicals that cause severe irritation or swelling of the respiratory tract and lining of the nose, throat, and lungs.
Incapacitating agent	Chemicals that make it difficult to think clearly or that lead to semi-consciousness or unconsciousness.
Metallic poisons	Toxic compounds made from metals like arsenic or mercury
Nerve agents	Chemicals that prevent the nervous system from functioning
Organic solvents	Chemicals that damage the skin and other tissues by dissolving fats and oils
Riot control/tear gas	Highly irritating agents normally used by law enforcement
Toxic alcohols	Poisonous alcohols that can damage the heart, kidneys, nervous system, such as methanol (wood alcohol) or ethylene glycol (antifreeze)
Vomiting agents	Chemicals that cause nausea and vomiting

For questions regarding OEHHA's Emergency Response Program please contact Shelley DuTeaux at [sduteaux@oehha.ca.gov](mailto:sduteaux@oehha.ca.gov). For general questions, please call the All OEHHA line at (510) 622-3200.

OEHHA is one of six agencies under the umbrella of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA).